



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2005

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**ROBERT ESPINO SENTENCED FOR SCHEME THAT
ALLOWED DRUGS THROUGH SIERRA BLANCA CHECKPOINT WITHOUT INSPECTION**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that in El Paso this morning, former Marfa Sector Border Patrol agent Robert Espino was sentenced to eight years in federal prison for his role in a scheme to smuggle cocaine through the Border Patrol's Sierra Blanca checkpoint without inspection.

"Even though we know that corruption exists in many parts of our country, it is still shocking to find a federal agent helping the criminals in exchange for dirty money. Mr. Espino betrayed his brothers and sisters in the Border Patrol and the people of this country," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

In addition to the prison term, United States District Judge Frank Montalvo ordered that Espino pay a \$1,000 fine and be placed under supervised release for a period of three years after completing his prison term.

On May 13, 2005, Espino pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance. By pleading guilty, Espino admitted that for two days beginning on September 17, 2004, he conspired with others to allow more than five kilograms of cocaine to pass through the checkpoint without inspection in exchange for more than \$5,000.

On September 21, 2005, former Border Patrol agent Aldo Manuel Erives was sentenced to 127 months imprisonment for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance. On September 29, 2005, Aldo's brother, Jose Lehi Erives, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on the same charge. Two additional co-defendants each face up to five years in federal prison after pleading guilty in May to conspiracy to possess a controlled substance with intent to distribute. David Garcia and Jesus Delgado, both former Marfa Sector Border Patrol agents, are scheduled to be sentenced at 9:00am on October 12, 2005.

Also resulting from this investigation, Roberto Beltran faces up to ten years in federal prison after pleading guilty on June 2, 2005, to smuggling approximately 750 illegal aliens. Beltran, together with Lehi Erives, conspired with agents Erives, Espino, Garcia and Delgado to allow hundreds of illegal aliens safe passage through the Sierra Blanca checkpoint over a one-year period beginning January 2004. Beltran is scheduled to be sentenced on October 13, 2005.

These cases were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorneys Mark Greenberg and Greg McDonald are prosecuting these cases on behalf of the government.

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